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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet is the sixth in a series of ten stemming from the view that language is central to learning, that teachers can gain insights into their work and into learning by examining the language of the classroom, and that current language theory can be the means to such insights. The pamphlet outlines a students-helping-students program for individualizing the classroom. The various sections present information on the following topics: the qualities to look for in selecting student helpers; the training program; implementation of the program, including how to begin it and how to use journals and talk to increase understanding; reading and the curriculum; social learning; and questions that arise in implementing the program. Excerpts from student journals and from transcripts of small group discussions are used throughout the pamphlet. (FL)

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Language in the Classroom: A Series. 6

A LEARNING TRIANGLE

Linda Marshall

Ray Waddell

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Merron Chorny

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

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FOREWORD

This pamphlet is one of a series, produced as discussion papers by a group of teachers who participated in a graduate course in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Calgary. In development, the papers reflect the method of the boys of Barbiana: each paper has been shaped and tempered, through several stages by the input of the group. In intent, the series reflects the aims of the pamphlets originated by the Writing Across the Curriculum Project Team of the Institute of Education at the University of London, to whom we are indebted for pointing the way.

The series stems from a view that language is central to learning, that teachers can gain insights into their work and into learning by examining the language of the classroom, and that current language theory can be the means to such insights. Further, the series represents a conviction that teachers are in the best position to understand the heuristic role of language in the classroom as well as to assess the needs of children in the schools and that they are the most likely to find solutions for problems in classroom practice. To realize this potential and to extend their influence, teachers need to offer their ideas and experiences freely and be willing to consider the ideas of their colleagues openly. It is in this spirit of sharing that these pamphlets are published.

We are grateful to Al Kahanoff, Principal of Branton Junior High School in Calgary for his generous editorial assistance and for his help in seeing the pamphlets through publication.

We also wish to thank Miss Lorraine Cockle for the cover design.

James Britton
Merron Chorny

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4. Talking, Writing and Learning
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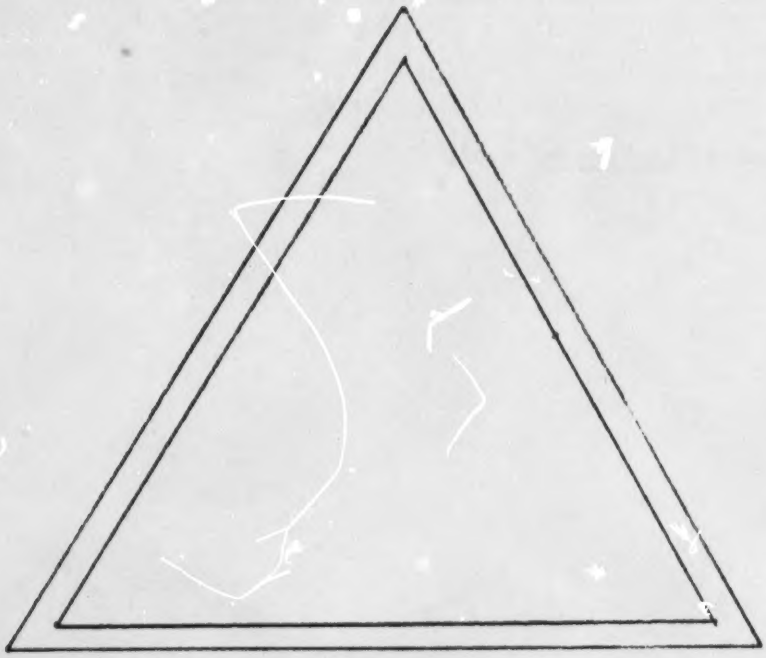
TEACHER
STUDENT
STUDENT-HELPER



STUDENT
TEACHER
STUDENT-HELPER

STUDENT-HELPER
STUDENT
TEACHER

Talk has always been the basic ingredient of learning in the classroom, be it in the form of the Socratic method of teaching, the formal debate, or free-flowing discussion. It is talk that solves problems and it is through its powers as Gusdorf says in La Parole, that, "I risk myself in confiding myself to others as others risk themselves to me, in the guise of the world. Each encounter disintegrates and integrates us. Communication has a creative power, for reduced to himself, man is much less than himself; whereas, in the light of openness to others, the possibility of

unlimited growth is offered."[1] May we propose that through our concept of the triangle, a third party can enter the traditional duet of teacher and student talk. By this act the possibilities of "unlimited growth" is increased.

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[1] G. Gusdorf, La Parole, p.67.

I. THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

The "little red schoolhouse" was perhaps not as antiquated as it appears. The "A" student in grade eight was delegated to give the grade two's their spelling dictatation or mark the grade three's arithmetic workbooks while the teacher was busy with the grade six geography lesson. It was literally impossible for the teacher to teach "one" lesson for the whole class. With three or four in each grade the teacher had to keep moving up and down the rows and grades with different lessons and different assignments for each. But is it any different today with class loads ranging from thirty to forty students? How does the teacher who wants to try to individualize his program keep track of the directions that students might follow if they seek to be unique? Where is the time for getting to know and to talk about the student's experiences outside the classroom that may affect his performance within it? Teachers need help in coping with the thoughts and questions of so many people. But where is the "A" student from the little red schoolhouse?

If "it all flows on a sea of talk", how does one teacher listen to thirty-eight people? Granted he has no trouble talking to them if he says the same thing to all of them at the same time. It is the listening and the students' talk that inevitably suffer. Expressive language is the language, both written and verbal, that the student brings from his home and environment to the classroom. Should this language not be the starting point of any learning situation? But then how does one person find the time to see and hear it all?

Perhaps we should return to some of the ways of the "little red schoolhouse" and the concept of students-helping-students as a viable form of learning.

II. A PROPOSED STUDENT HELPER PROGRAM

Recent innovations in curriculum have provided opportunities for designing new programs. What is there to prevent us from designing a course centred upon students helping students?

Let us suppose we have a group of potential student helpers who would choose this proposed course as their option. In our selection of them, perhaps we should not limit entry only to top students. A desire to help is not a characteristic only of those who have an "A" grade. In fact, sometimes deliberate risks might be taken in accepting a poorer student who may benefit from the program as much as or more than those whom he seeks to help.

Some prospective helpers may be looking for a new and different experience. They may be looking for involvement in helping people and through such involvement improving their own communication and helping skills. Some of them may be looking for experience in serving in leadership capacity and look to a course that gives them a high degree of responsibility to others rather than just to themselves. Many of them may like the idea of talking and writing to a group of individuals in a classroom, sharing ideas about themselves and classroom activities. The student and student helper could share a daily journal concerning their lives, both inside and outside the classroom. There would be no correction or evaluation of this journal, in order

to create a channel of trustful communication and, at the same time, to eliminate a threatening atmosphere which could be inhibiting to writing growth.

III. PHASE I: A TRAINING PROGRAM

As a first step it would be wise to set up a training program involving a coordinating teacher (or teachers) and the helpers for a period of time before assigning the helpers. But training sessions should be reinforced by some relevant theory. Taking a look at a language model (see page 4)[2] to see the different functions of writing may help us justify the importance of expressive writing in learning situations. The University of London's pamphlet entitled Why Write?[3] could be perused after having the student helpers attempt to answer that question themselves. We could discuss the six audience categories (page 4 of Why Write?), emphasizing the first and third, the student to self, and student to a partner in dialogue and stressing that the sixth category (student to teacher as examiner) be left solely to the teacher.

The word empathy would play an important role in such a dialogue. We could look at its meaning by employing Carkhuff's model of a helping situation.[4] Role playing could also be used in making helpers

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[2] J. Britton, Language and Learning, p.237.

[3] London University Institute of Education, Why Write?

[4] R. Carkhuff, The Art of Helping.

A LANGUAGE FUNCTION* MODEL

TRANSACTIONAL LANGUAGE	EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE	POETIC LANGUAGE
(PARTICIPANT ROLE LANGUAGE)	(The ordinary, day-to-day language which is close to the self.)	(SPECTATOR ROLE LANGUAGE)
dealing with the way the world is		dealing with the way I feel about the world
Language adapted to getting things done in the world.	Language which verbalizes current preoccupations, displays moods of the moment.	Language to digest experience, to reflect upon what has happened and speculate on what might happen.

Informative	Conative
- to record	- to regulate
- to report	- to persuade
- to generalise	
- to theorise	

Importance of Expressive Language

a. the means by which we approach and meet each other, offering and accepting what is common and differentiating

b. the first tentative formulation in words of most plans for action.

c. the way by which we influence one another

Poetic language is the medium of an art: it is language adapted to constructive artistic purposes, to the production of objects of contemplation. It strives for internal relations that give it a unified structure and make it a unique object.

*Language functions to satisfy material needs, to regulate or manipulate behaviour, to show a sense of other persons and oneself in relation to them, to understand oneself and discover one's own individuality, to find out, particularly about the external world, to give enjoyment, and to pass information.

more aware of the effects of their own resources on others, particularly when responding in the daily journals.

One practical stage of the training session would be a close look at some writing samples from the students' journals, written for the teacher, that range in style from pure narrative (Last night I went to the pool hall, went home, went to bed, got up), to creative writing (a poem about, say Freedom), to detailed informational writing (Motorcycles, gymnastics, music). (These samples would correspond to the three main categories of our language model: EXPRESSIVE, POETIC, TRANSACTIONAL). The helpers and coordinating teacher(s) could discuss in small groups various appropriate responses to these pieces of writing. We could emphasize at this time that no evaluation (marking or correcting) takes place in the journals.

A final practical stage would be an enquiry into the group discussion techniques that a discussion leader should have at his command. Helpers should be given opportunities to practise such techniques on each other, noting their own strengths and weaknesses.

Once the training session is drawing to a close, some thought should be given to the helper's placement in the classroom. There are several grade levels and many teacher personalities in any department. Each helper will be working with one teacher at one grade level. In order to make an appropriate choice, we should have the helper visit all the classes and interview the teachers about their classroom procedures. We then should make an attempt to match the wishes of the helper with the needs of the teacher and the class.

Once placed in the classroom, each helper must stay in contact with his coordinating teacher. We could ask the helper to keep a weekly record of his experiences in the program, a record of the incidents, the thoughts, the frustrations, and the people the helper encounters. These records could be handed in to the coordinating teacher for perusal and later discussion. Such discussions could take place in meetings of helpers where ideas are shared, problems are aired, and any frustrations relieved. Their talk would help them discover that they are not alone in that often confusing arena of dealing with people.

Some Theoretical Thoughts for a Proposed Training Program

> A (person) should not be made to feel that it does not pay to take risks. The teacher's first response to a piece of writing should be personal and positive. Only after responding to what has been said is it reasonable to turn to how.[5]

> Language flows (both talk and writing) when the students feel they are making a genuine communication -- not a phony one for someone who doesn't want what you're giving him, but merely wants to check up on whether you can give it.[6]

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[5] Bullock Report, p.167.

[6] From Talking to Writing, p.13.

> We may keep too tight a control over talking and writing, so some students cease to use them for their own purposes of establishing personal relevance and relating new experiences to their total picture of the world.[7]

> Children feel they must write in transactional language. If it's about the 'subject', it's relevant; if it's about 'you', it's not. The students don't see that they need to reflect on what's happened and find significance in it for themselves rather than pass on their data like a book. Thus, the excitement, motivation, expansion, details, arguments, speculation, etc. are gone.[8]

> Behavior presents itself as man's principal instrument of enquiry. Without it, his questions are academic and he gets nowhere. When it is prescribed for him he runs around in dogmatic circles. But when he uses it boldly to ask questions, a flood of unexpected answers rises to tax his utmost capacity to understand.[9]

IV. PHASE II - IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDENT HELPER PROGRAM

Do these theoretical thoughts make sense? We think they do,

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[7] From Information to Understanding, p.30.

[8] From Talking to Writing, p.17.

[9] G. Kelly, in D. Bannister (ed.), Perspectives in Personal Construct Theory, p.260.

because we tried them. In the next section of this pamphlet we would like to present some transcripts of tapes made of student helpers' experiences and their talk about them. We have undertaken such a program based on these thoughts in the English classes at our high school and feel it to be a very valid and exciting means involving students in language, learning and growth. In most cases helpers worked with students in courses the student helper had already taken. Rare exceptions were made. The only prerequisite we stressed for taking the program was a recommendation from the helper's previous English teacher.

One of the tasks of the student helpers was to help to respond to students' journal writing. The first ten minutes of each daily English period were scheduled for writing. Every student was expected to write on a subject of his choice and concern. Teachers and student helpers responded to this writing.

A. The Beginning and the Reasons Why

It's a scary, volatile situation at term's beginning when one does not know all the reasons that the students might have for registering in such an option, or who will work best with whom, or indeed, whether the student will be a good helper or not. Yet not to try may mean not to find out. And the statements of several people encouraged us to try. Kelly writes: "A person who is completely and continually involved in the ultimate consequences of his act is in no position to experiment with new ideas."[10]

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[10]G. Kelly, A Theory of Personality, p.170.

Hannam, Smyth and Stevenson say: "The school must become a more open community where children can become themselves and sufficiently at ease to accept the learning situations that we offer them. They should feel sufficiently valued as persons to work easily alongside their more able fellows."[11]

The Schoolboys of Barbiana urge that "the right goal is to give oneself to others. . . .This is the ultimate goal, which should be remembered from time to time. . . .The immediate one, which must be remembered every minute, is to understand others and to make oneself understood."[12]

B. Understanding

> Becky (student helper): I was talking with the teacher about the 'student helper' program and the one journal he showed to me in particular was a student writing some sort of poem about a different world. At the end he put in great big exclamation marks "Please Understand!!!" And I think that this is really terrific because it shows that there are some who are really reaching out to someone to understand what they are trying to say at their own level. . . .

In the classroom where students number between 30 and 40, the amount of communication that ensues between the teacher and between the high number of students is limited by the odds. Student helpers increase the opportunities for talk and idea sharing to take place.

> I risk myself in confiding myself to others as others risk themselves to me, in the guise of the world. Each encounter integrates us. Communication has a creative power, for reduced to himself, man is much less than himself; whereas, in the light of openness to others,

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[11] C. Hannam, P. Smyth, N. Stevenson, Young Teachers and Reluctant Learners.

[12] Schoolboys of Barbiana, Letter to a Teacher, p.89.

the possibility of unlimited growth is offered. . . .[13]

In taking these risks, we maintain that a great deal of growth can take place.

> Tanya: I really got to know her. Other than working with them in class or anything, I worked with a group in the class, and this one girl, she really had problems at home and everything and now she's in a group home and nobody. . . When I first went into that class I never thought much of her. I've known her from past years, I thought she was. . .a real bitch. But now I've got to know her through the journals and the class. I get to know her outside the class and everything and, you know, I think she's a real nice person. And she's gone through so much, you know. I think that's a really important thing: it's not just a classroom thing.
>
> Teacher: It's stripped away this prejudging thing; the whole veneer that you thought was her has been replaced by more realism.
>
> Tanya: I see her in the hall now and I'm with friends of mine and they'll say, "Look at that kid. What a tramp," and I just look at them, but I think to myself, "You know, I thought that once too."

The words of students like Tanya do much to allay our fears at the term's outset. If we place them alongside Britton's thoughts on program planning, we set our fears aside and get down to the business at hand, that of writing and talking: "I want a program that makes sense when we look back at it, not a program that makes sense when we start out -- that's too restrictive."[14]

C. Writing and the Journal

Teacher: Those are good answers but they're also

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[13] C. Gusdorf, La Parole, p.67.

[14] J. Britton, in discussion at the University of Calgary, 1976.

> dangerous answers, aren't they, because a kid very easily can set out to prove to you then that constant writing does not indeed improve it?
>
> Danny: Well, maybe there's that bit about James Britton. He says he wants to be able to look back and see what he's done instead of having to look forward. He sees too many restrictions. You can tell it'll be good for you when you grow up. But why don't you show him, tell him, to look back -- show him? And you have to, you kinda have to go out and -- he can't look back by himself. If you go back and help him as an outside observer, interested in him too, it makes him feel better about it.

Bev, a partner in the conversation interjects a very practical note to the concept of looking back instead of always ahead:

> Bev: That's good. I was asked a question, a real serious question, about what should I do -- my boyfriend this, my boyfriend that -- and I said to her: I can't say how you should run your relationship -- but look back and look at all the things she wrote to me, about how bad she felt every second day because of the way her boyfriend treated her. And I said, "Read back and you'll realize what you've been treated like!" I don't know whether she ever did or not, but that's the only advice I could give her.

In this case both the student's writing and the helper's response, illustrates the importance of the journal. It's a process of learning rather than a product.

> "Process orientation is living involvement and is more highly productive than an orientation towards product. The process oriented problem-solver who keeps a good record (words, pictures, plans, souveniers, etc.) will have far greater product than the product oriented problem-solver without a record of his rush to his goal."[15]

The language of these records from the journals is almost always

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[15] D. Koberg and J. Bagnall, The Universal Traveller, p.26.

expressive in nature. The pamphlets Why Write? and From Talking to Writing clearly indicate its importance in the learning situation: Expressive writing occurs when the writer is of interest to the reader. It can include facts, speculation, anecdotes, or emotional outburst in which nothing is held against the writer. It can be very much like speech; it can shuttle to and fro.[16]

> Language flows (both talk and writing) when the students feel they are making a genuine communication -- not a phony one for someone who doesn't want what you're giving him, but merely wants to check up on whether you can give it.[17]

Maureen's work with Tim is quite indicative of a genuine communication:

> Maureen: Sometimes I think I could spend half an hour trying to figure out what he wrote; it's really different.
>
> Teacher: It's not that his writing is bad; this is just deep stuff.
>
> Maureen: It's not bad; it's really deep. Whereas you know if the teacher was getting the journal he wouldn't have the time to sit down and really think about what the kid writes.
>
> Teacher: Is that sort of saying that you look forward to that journal?
>
> Maureen: Oh, I love it, I save it till last, because I need that time. I can usually do the rest of them in school. I always take his home and we get into some really neat sort of talks.
>
> Teacher: In print?

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[16] Why Write?, p.12.

[17] From Talking to Writing, p.13.

> Maureen: In print. And to look at it once isn't enough. I'll go back and I'll reread what he wrote the day before or the week before and each time I read it I'll get more insight. I mean, usually the first time you read, you've got a notion but you don't know what he's trying to put across. And each time you go back and read it you get more out of it.

It is important that the students have these opportunities to share ideas in the expressive form of writing with a student helper, because when they write to the teacher, "children feel they must write in transactional language. If it's about the 'subject', it's relevant, if it's about you, it's not. The students don't see that they need to reflect on what's happened and find significance in it for themselves rather than pass on their data like a book. Thus, the excitement, motivation, expansion, details, arguments, speculation, etc., are gone. . ."[18]

Student helpers can be instrumental in helping the student find this excitement, motivation, expansion, and details, as shown by Maureen's analogy between the worth of gold and the work of writing:

> Maureen: And eventually, I know that or one of the days I convinced him that journal writings were of use. He didn't admit that journal writings were of use, but in a debate he agreed that he would write two or three sentences a day, at least two or three. That's the story.
>
> Teacher: I don't know. . . . You won the debate.
>
> Maureen: Anyway, I won the debate and he admitted, he agreed with me now that journal writings were of use. I think the best explanation that I gave him was: The only way a journal can be useless is if you make it useless. You'll only get out of it what you put into

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[18] From Talking to Writing, p.17.

it. Example: If you take a piece of gold and say, "It's useless," and throw it away, then it's useless. If you use it for. . . .if you get money for it, then it's not useless.

D. Talking

For those thinking that the teacher should keep a tighter control over the writing and talk between students, the pamphlet, From Information to Understanding, gives us a warning. We may keep too tight a control over talking and writing as a result, some students cease "to use them for their own purposes of establishing personal relevance" and relating new experiences to their total picture of the world.[19]

Teacher: What did you talk about?

Tanya: Everything! I just ....oh like Dougie, he's really good; he's a really good talker. So I said, "Dougie, what do you want to talk about?"

Teacher: Was this after the class was over?

Tanya: Yeah, this was after class.

Teacher: They were finished, eh; they didn't even have to be there?

Tanya: No and like I said to them, I said to them: "You guys what, what if I had a class right now? And they said: Well, you'd get up and leave. And I said: Well, we want to stay here and talk. So, I said: Okay Dougie, start it off; so he starts talking and boy can that guy talk! He was talking---we were--just anything --we'd pick something and then we'd have a great big discussion on it and then...

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[19] From Information to Understanding, p.30.

Other Student: It was really good for me too.

Teacher: Okay, like what...this is grade 10.

Tanya: We just...well, we brought up sex in the schools and we had a big talk on that.

Teacher: Sex in the school?

Tanya: Yeah.

Teacher: Where?

Tanya: Remember I told you about one guy; he asked me what I thought about it, and, well, what I wrote back he took it wrong. Well, we had a big talk about that you know.

Teacher: Was he there?

Tanya: Yeah.

Teacher: Okay.

Tanya: Just the other day, I wrote something back to him and he found it really, really personal. But we had a great big discussion on this and finally I realized that I was wrong. He had me right there on the spot. So finally I said, okay, I was wrong, and then, you know, he was...

Teacher: Whereas that couldn't have happened in the journal, couldn't have happened in the writing.

Tanya's conversation with Dougie and friends is a socializing process, very vital to the feeling of self worth on the part of both students. However, it has little relationship to the content of the course. Many conversations do take place that pertain to course content, like the conversations held with students about their reading asssignments.

E. Reading and Curriculum

Teacher: Can somebody tell me what happens in a book review, a book talk? You all should be able to tell me.

Danny: They're supposed to come out and give you some opinions on their book and they have to think about it instead of just reading about it on the back cover. You know how people watch shows; they can sit there and watch T.V., half-hour shows night after night and they're never forced to think about them and you don't really gain anything if you're just sitting there in dull existence.

Teacher: So there's a danger of reading becoming like television.

Danny: Yeah, but if you have to spew back to someone else an idea or what you thought about the book or have to go over it, I think you'll think about it a little bit more.

Teacher: OK, and they do too, consequently, right?

Bev: Yeah, it helps me too, a person tells me about a book and I say, ah, that sounds like a good book and get it.

Teacher: Yes, maybe.

Danny: And also, a lot of books talk. You don't just talk about the book, you bring up ideas and things and you evaluate them. Like science fiction; you go and start talking about a certain idea and you ask questions.

Teacher: So the theme is centered in the book; you can pursue it, if you've got the time.

(For instance, here we listen in on such a book talk in progess:)

Student: Anyway, the first one is Ring World, by Larry Niven.

Ingrid: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about the story?

Student: It's about this old guy who's about 180 years old and he's taken drugs so he can live longer and all this stuff, but he's bored, and every once in a while he takes a space ship and goes out to the edge of the universe and sits there for a year and thinks about life and all this. And then when he come back, things have changed and he's got to get used to things again and that's how he keeps from being bored. And at the beginning, this puppeteer comes up, and that's an alien which is ah --it looks like an alien. It's got a couple of arms and then it's got ah-well forget about that. I won't describe it to you. But they're very shy and timid--they don't like to take risks. See I read this about four weeks ago. And they're very protective about themselves. They don't like space travel because you know a space ship might get an air leak, you know. It's a one in a million chance, but they don't want to take that, so you know only the insane will travel in space ships to other worlds.

Ingrid: This is the future, right?

Student: Yeah, it is the future.

Ingrid: Around what year?

Student: I don't know--2100,2200. It doesn't say.

Ingrid: You mean everybody has a spaceship and they can just take off?

Student: No, this guy's also tremendously rich.

Ingrid: Oh, just <u>rich</u> people have space ships then?

Student: No, not that either. You can rent space ships you know. Budget-rent-it, Rent-a-Ship, things like that.

Ingrid: Yeah, well it says here, "The Puppeteer's voice became identical to the girl's."

Student: Oh!

Ingrid: How come?

Student: Well, the Puppeteers have, like they've got

necks, this long, which is a foot and a half, for the sake of the tape recorder. And if they scream it sounds like an orchestra warming up and you get everything in there and its totally musical.

Student: Oh! they're really neat things.

Ingrid: Was this book easy for you to read or hard or what?

Student: Actually, I got this book from a fried of mine. I've been talking about him for so long; he's my best friend and he said to read it in five days. It took me three weeks to read it.

Ingrid: Is that right?

Student: I started, but I didn't read it all the time. I've got tons of books at home that I buy and try and read.

Ingrid: Yes, well, this, this book...there'd be... there's small writing, there's 342 pages, yeah, you're right. Would you like to tell somebody else to read it or would, what's the word, um...

2nd Student: Recommend.

Ingrid: Would you recommend it for somebody else?

Student: Would I recommend it for somebody else? All depends if they like science fiction or not.

Ingrid: Yeah.

Student: This ia a lot like old science ficiton, like, um, back in the 1930's when it just got started. It was hardcore science fiction. If you wrote a science fiction story, it had to have a great big long explanation about futuristic machines and futuristic happenings. But nowadays you're getting into fantasy, which is just...it's got a little bit about the future or even about the present, but it's got some kind of fancy ending. I write stories like that anyway, I'll let you read my "Die Again". I've got to get that from Mr. Taylor.

The following transcript was recorded in a discussion where Kathy, a twelfth grade student helper, took a small group of eleventh grade students by herself to discuss the poem, "Richard Cory" by E.A. Robinson. We join the session near the end of the poem discussion.

Kathy: Before you read the last line, did you think he was a success?

June: No...some people just aren't all that happy. They put on a show that they have everything but way down deep they're not.

Kathy: Do you think you are a success right now?

June: No, I don't.

Shaun: I do, I'm a success.

June: I don't profess to be a success; there's always room for improvement everywhere.

Kathy: What do you think the definition of success is, what do you have to do to be successful?

Shaun: Finish school.

(laughter) No way!

Catherine: There's lots of people that...

June: ...haven't finished school and they're still a success in the system.

Shaun: Yeah, but wouldn't the guy who's got only grade nine schooling, wouldn't it be easier for me to get a job than him?

June: Yeah, but big deal!

Shaun: That's, in a sense, success.

June: It's just like you're saying; you pick out all the

person's faults. Well, just because you didn't finish school...

Shaun: I wasn't picking out his faults, it's just...

Kathy: No but what...it's just himself...like some people feel that in order to be a success they have to finish school; whereas, others feel that they have to go to work.

Catherine: If you finish school that doesn't mean you're a SUCCESS, you know...

Kathy: What do you think a success is then?

Catherine: Well, it's a whole bunch of different things; things like if you're...

June: Happy with yourself.

Catherine: Yeah, yeah!

Shaun: Same as when you work on a dress or something. You make it and you finish it and you admire it...that's success. You mastered it.

Catherine: Yes, but maybe you didn't finish high school but you're a success at what you did.

Shaun: What I mean is that you finally finish school; you don't have to worry about it any more. That's success.

Catherine: Sure, if you want to be somethin' like a doctor; so even if you've finished high school you're not a success yet.

Shaun: Not necessarily a doctor.

Catherine: Well, a lawyer or...

Shaun: Naw, c'mon...you guys get down a little lower like a police officer.

Catherine: Sure and you still gotta go to a special school for cops.

Shaun: Yeah, but you have to finish school, too.

Kathy: What do you think a success is, Karen?

Karen: Uh...there's so many different meanings for the word...Catherine's right, there are so many meanings for success. It can be anything really. I mean, I think it's happiness in yourself, doing what you want to do and be happy in what you're doing.

Shaun: If you don't believe in yourself you're never going to be successful.

Catherine: If you're in a beauty contest and you win... that's fairly shallow, but it's success.

Kathy: You can be a success at any age though. There's different levels. As you grow older, maybe the things that you need to be a success change. Now I'm only 16... 17. All I have to do is have grade twelve. As you get older you have to get a job, a success; plus be happy, and then you have kids...

Catherine: Then all of us are successes in our own way... we're not a bunch of hoods and you know we're not bad kids so we're probably successes.

Shaun: I'm a good kid, I don't know about you.

Catherine: Oh, sure with your black eye...(laughter).

Kathy: Do you think that this poem is very realistic... do you think it happens very often?

Shaun: Every day.

Catherine: I don't think it happens; I mean, physically shot in the head...maybe some people do because they are so happy.

Shaun: More turn to things like alcohol...

Catherine: Yeah, they give up on life or something.

Kathy: Why do you think he shot himself?

Shaun: Didn't like himself.

June: He was unhappy with himself.

Shaun: He didn't beleive in himself that's why he shot himself.

In this excerpt we see Kathy, the student helper, serving several functions as a group discussion leader. She takes the group out of the poem and into their own lives. She reinterprets for Shaun when he is not being understood by the others. She tries to make Catherine be more specific in her personal thoughts on success. She even encourages Karen, who is extremely shy, to make one of the most positiye contributions to the entire discussion. She sums up with her own interpretation of the issue at hand, and then subtly takes the group back for a final look at the poem by looking at the suicide. Quite a masterly job for a young girl of sixteen. We would say that she was a successful helper in this instance.

The students in Norman's group have all read the novel, Lord of the Flies and had discussed the main issues of the book in the large group class situtations. That is why Norman introduces the topic on a fairly sophisticated level. His questions keep the conversation moving in the direction he wants it to go without domination and neglecting the direction the students want it to go. He summarizes what has been said half way through the discussion, and tries to direct the students to a vicarious experience by asking them what they would have done under similar circumstances. He does a fine job of directing them to the allegorical implications of the novel. Perhaps the only area in which he could be faulted was the fact that he permitted two students to dominate the conversation. It was a well directed learning situation that was interrupted only by the bell.

Norman: We are here to discuss William Golding's allegory Lord of the Flies. Okay, what are some of the symbols in this story, that he uses?

Mary-Ann: Okay. Simon, he represents sort of a saint, and Piggy represents wisdom, and Ralph, he represents logic and order, along with the conch. Like, the conch is the law and order too and Jack represents the power.

Norman: Are there any other symbols?

Lorie: Leadership.

Norman: Okay, who represents leadership?

Several Students: Jack, Jack and Ralph.

Norman: Jack and Ralph. What else -- is there anything else presented in the story? What does that 'Lord of the Flies' part represent, like that pig head?

John: Evil--it represents evil and like Simon was having that sort of interview with him. The pig's head was sort of telling him that the whole bun--that all the kids on the island were gonna do him in and when--then he fainted and then he went back down to the beach and Jack and Ralph and all the other kids. Jack saw him come out of the forest crawling. He said, "There's the beast," and they all jumped on him and killed him.

Norman: Well, the pig head wasn't talking, was it?

Vivian: No, it was in his mind, but that still resembled evil because he was looking at it, though, as if it was evil, because of the way he was looking at it. To him it was evil, otherwise he wouldn't be saying these things; it was really representing the rest of the boys.

Lester: (interrupting) It wasn't really saying things though.

Others: In his mind...

Lester: In his mind he was playing two people, the pig, as evil, and himself.

Norman: He was schizophrenic, then?

Lester: Well, if you want to put it that way.

Vivian: The pig was more or less representing the rest of the boys, too, because the pig, to him, was saying, "They're going to do you in." So it was the boys that were evil ones, 'cause he was talking to the pig.

Lester: Everybody was evil because everybody was going to get everybody, 'cause that's how they represented each other.

Norman: Okay, why does Simon come back down the hill after talking to the pig? What was he going to do?

Lorie: He was going to tell the other guys that there was no beast, because he had found the man with the parachute. And it was just a man. And everybody else, they thought it was the beast or something.

Norman: Well, how did the beast come about?

Vivian: Just in their minds--little boys dreaming about the creepers...

Lorie: They saw snakes and creepers and it was dark and that and they were away from their own home and their parents.

Vivian: When Simon found that, well that man that they all thought was the beast, was he looking for it or did he just go...

Norman: Yeah, they were looking for it.

Vivian: No, did he look for it on purpose?

(Everyone talks at once).

Norman: Okay, what I've got from what you said: Simon was a saint and he made this beast up in his mind and then he was talking to the pig head, saying, you know, making his own conversations and he was coming back for some unknown reason. And while he had created this beast, all the boys thought there really was one or something and they were out looking for it when he ran into the man with the parachute who was hanging from a tree, dead.

Vivian: Uh,ah (indicating 'no'). Simon never made up the

beast; Simon knew all along. It says in the beginning of the book, he say, "Maybe the beast is just us," and all the other boys laughed. He kinda says, "Maybe it's only our mind," and the other boys just laughed at him.

Mary-Ann: It was just the little ones who made it up.

Vivian: And the bigger ones started to believe it because Jack and Ralph didn't believe it but they were still afraid of it.

Student: Yeah.

Vivian: I mean, Jack, leaving a pig's head more or less saying, "Okay we'll leave this for you as long as you don't come and get us," sort of thing. That's what he was leaving the pig head for.

Norman: Why was Simon coming back to the group? What was his purpose?

All: To tell them there was no beast; that they had just made it up.

Norman: What do you thing Golding is trying to prove in this story?

Vivian: Okay, I think what he's trying to prove is that everyone thinks evil comes from man, society. It's around you; it's in the environment that you live with and everything. But here he took away the boy's society, and they were there with nothing else to influence them...the evil in them. And he proves right there where evil comes from, evil's in you all the time and it's just brought out and it's not in the society. It's in you all the time and it depends on the circumstances what brings it out.

Norman: Don't you think if you were marooned on some island you might, that you might go nuts too and start killing things and sticking a pig's head up to say, "Uh, beast, stay away; you pig head here, keep the beast away from me."

Vivian: Okay that, I think, I don't see there's any reason for Jack to...Jack didn't go crazy. I think it was more in him. He wanted power.

Lorie: He wanted higher status.

Vivian: All the time, even at the beginning, he needed people to back him up. And if there was no one to back him up...like when he called that last meeting, he goes "All right, whoever wants to vote for me," and no one voted, and it described in the book how his face turned red and how he was totally embarrassed by it. And yet Ralph doesn't need anyone to back him up. Ralph still was able to go on his own and yet Jack needed all the other guys and still Ralph won over Jack.

Norman: Who was right, Ralph and Piggy or Jack?

Student: Ralph and Piggy.

Mary-Ann: Because they represented organization and logic and they had in mind to get rescued, to keep the fire going the whole time. And that's actually really what got them rescued, when they set the island on fire.

Vivian: Well, it was just the island on fire.

Lorie: But it was smoking and everything and that's really what got them rescued.

(Several Students talk at once).

Vivian: Jack wanted to play and to him play was hunting. It was this power, you know, we're going to dress up as savages. Why not? We've got the environment to do it; let's play it all the way.

Norman: Why did they kill Piggy and Simon?

Vivian: Simon was an accident. It wasn't...they were all,...I don't know,...they were all doing that chant and I think that got them. Okay, when you're doing a chant and you're all hyped up about something and it was dark, they were all scared, and they're all sitting there. "Kill the beast, cut her throat" and all this. They're sitting there thinking; they're probably all imagining the beast coming and all of a sudden this thing comes crawling out...

Lorie: And also Jack.

Lorie: Simon, he had blood on his face, I mean, with it being dark and everything and them yelling the chant. The chant just gets them.

Norman: So they thought Simon was the beast.

Vivian: Yeah. And when they killed Piggy it was really...I don't think it was intended to kill him. Piggy didn't have his glasses on and he couldn't see to get out of the way.

Lorie: I think you're wrong, because I think they killed him intentionally; they killed Piggy intentionally.

Vivian: Okay, well, I, I mean where does it say...

Lorie: It doesn't say, but they set up that rock and everything. And also Piggy, he was the law and order, like with the conch and everything 'cause all the time, he always wanted to make sure the conch was safe. Like when they came to steal his glasses, they thought they were going to take the conch. But they never. He was always scared they were gonna take the law and order. Without that, they were dead and so they just took away the law and order by killing Piggy and the conch. It said in the thing, "The conch broke into a million pieces."

Norman: You're sticking to the story and she's going to the allegory part and I tend to agree with her because once Piggy and the conch, representing wisdom and law and order, were killed and the conch is broken into a million pieces, then the power takes over.

Vivian: I agree with that, too. But I don't think it was meant all along for...you know, well..."Piggy and Ralph are gonna come back for the glasses; let's kill Piggy when he gets here 'cause we know he's gonna be carrying the conch." I don't think it was done like that. Okay. Piggy had the conch...

Mary-Ann: I think it was.

Norman: That's the story.

Mary-Ann: Do you think they weren't really going to kill him? What about in the beginning?

Norman: That's the story; that's the story. That's the story, but Golding allegorically is trying to say that wisdom, law and order doesn't always win out, that power usually takes over and he did that by having Piggy killed and the conch broken.

Vivian: Okay, I agree with that but all I'm just saying is that it wasn't intentionally done like: all the time, they're gonna come back for their glasses, let's kill them. I mean, I don't think it was thought about before

they did it. Okay, when Ralph and Jack were sitting there fighting, Roger probably sat there and thought, "Well gee, if I knock Piggy off, then all the law and order's gone." Okay, that may have been the way it was thought, but I don't think it was thought out as a tribe, you know: "Let's kill Piggy when he comes back."

Norman: Yeah, okay.

Lorie: No, still, it's still done intentionally, even though it's not thought out before.

Vivian: I know, it was. Okay you guys, it's time to go; it's five after.

F. Social Learning

Labov says, "the social situation is the most powerful determinant of verbal behavior and one must enter into the right social relation with a child if he wants to find out what the child can do."[20]

Again this is not always possible when dealing with high numbers of students. In order to facilitate a learning situation, student helpers can often act as intermediaries between a busy teacher and his students. Even misunderstandings can be avoided at times.

Diane: You can be a friend to somebody. A couple of kids in my group...they think it's too much to write in their journal and they couldn't put it in the right words. Well, I was talking to them and they started about their personal lives. You can be a listening friend to them too.

Teacher: Is it outside the realm of a specific task you have to do, like make a film or put together their project?

Diane: Yeah. I think it's really good because then if something happens and the person is just not, not beginning to do anything in class and his mind is on something else, then you pretty well know, have an idea of what his situation is at home and what's going on in the situation and so you can understand a little better and you don't jump to conclusions.

Teacher: Which sometimes is quite easy for a teacher to do who doesn't know that background.

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[20] W. Labov, "The Logic of Nonstandard English," Language in Education.

> Diane: Yeah, and then you can stop the teacher if you know exactly what's happening and the teacher feels that, you know, he's lazy and he might get on his back.

The ground for misunderstanding is often not social, it can be academic or lie in the realm of language register. It is often a student helper who can be instrumental in sorting out this dilemma:

> Judy: "They understand what we're talking about better than they understand what he (the teacher) is talking about."
>
> Teacher: "Why?"
>
> Judy: "Because even I can't understand him. I don't know, it's just that we're on the same level and he's, you know, way higher than that 'cause he knows--he uses university stuff like you do. And we use, we use our language, you know."

One student who was new to the school indicated in her journal that she did not feel at one with the others in the class:

> "Dear Jo: I miss all of my friends in Ucluelet and I want to go back and live there. I know I should not feel sorry for myself like this, but that's what you're for right! "Right". Thank you, "Your Welcome". You're nice and I hate the city. I feel like that girl Laurie in "Cage Without a Key."
>
> September 29,
> Carol
>
> "Dear Jo: I almost could not write to you because my dear little pen was threatening to run out. But I had faith in him so he didn't. Today you might be interested in my little dog. His name is Oscar Von Joscelyn. He has a longer name than that but it's a half page so I won't. He is a terrier, a white terrier with five brown patches on and a cute black nose. He and my garden and me are all best friends, here is a picture of him. He's a male, as you should have guessed.
>
> September 30,
> Carol

This student's helper was influential in making her feel more accepted and wanted, as this excerpt taken from her journal a few months later

"Friday. Dear Jo: I walked into the classroom today, and there in, the middle of the room was a gorgeous sight that I ever saw. There in the middle of the room was Ingrid, "my teacher aid", standing tall and pretty.

November 7,
Carol

It is this kind of an encounter which would not be possible in a large class without a student helper. In the student helper program, we strive for the encounter between teacher, student helper and pupil as learning people all. We seek the encounter between the pupils' outlook, experience, and representation of their experience and the teacher's (and the helper's too). We acknowledge that student, teacher, and helper are different and we seek to encourage growth in learning through the encounter of those differences. The teacher (and helper) have to be aware of the language of the students if the students are to become more aware.

Cheryl: She told me at the very beginning that if I got even a line out of him that it would be really good, and at first he didn't, wasn't too enthused about writing. And now, I've got him so he's writing every day.

Teacher: Every day?

Cheryl: Every day. Pretty good, eh?

Teacher: Now if the person who volunteered something hasn't volunteered enough, I want to know how you did it? What's the secret?

Cheryl: Sex appeal?

Teacher: Really!

Cheryl: No. I just...one day we came in here and we sat down and he just talked about everything in general, about how he felt about life and what he wanted to do. And at first all thoughts were, you know, the world is crazy, I don't want to live anymore, and all that and I, I tried to get him to answer why it was crazy.

* * * * * *

Teacher: There will be people who will say--let us play the devil's advocate for a minute here--who would say: What does getting to know people have to do with learning, learning facts?

Tanya: You have to know, you have to know a person before you can talk to him well.

Teacher: What do you mean? Professors do it every day, they talk to 450 people in a lecture hall?

Tanya: About a certain subject. But in their journals they don't talk about a certain thing; they talk about their life in a sense.

Teacher: Well, they can live their life between 7 and 9 in the morning before they come to school and from 4 o'-clock to midnight, before they go to bed. That's their life.

Tanya: Okay, but you have to, you have to know them. I don't mean know them personality-wise, I mean, know them; know what they do and what they like to do and...

Teacher: Well, tell me, what does that have to do with learning, tell me?

Tanya: You learn about each other. Don't you think that learning about people is a...that's a bit like learning about life? That's what you're doing in the journals. You're communicating and you're learning to communicate and to learn to communicate you have to get to know the person.

2nd Student: How do you learn to communicate?

3rd Student: You have to get respect.

Tanya: You have to get respect so that they can trust you with what they're writing, why they're doing this and because of what reason and all that. I mean I swear when I write in my journals because it puts more feeling into it.

2nd Student: It gives you a chance to get close to somebody. You get to know them, because if they want to talk about it, I'm sure they can write about it.

Teacher: You know there are people in education who maintain that getting close to people has nothing to do with it. Take the lecture method up at the university--one

person, 450 in that theatre. I'm going to get close to little Suzie Q up in row Q? What does getting close have to do with learning?

2nd Student: Because that way maybe they'll be more willing to learn. Because, if I had a teacher aid that I couldn't talk to, I wouldn't want to learn, I mean, if I couldn't talk to them and they didn't answer my journal or anything, I wouldn't want to learn from them

Teacher: Laura shouldn't have held back what she thought.

Student: No.

Teacher: Now how is he learning in that situation? Now he's back; he's come back with a single word, a single derogatory word. How is he learning there? How is that guy learning? Maureen, you brought it up, what's happening there?

Maureen: Well, that everything isn't peachy-keen; that other people have opinions that he may not agree with. I mean, you just can't hide behind laughter and games: It won't work and that's for sure.

Teacher: Where do you think it's going to go? Any of you want to make a prediction?

Student: He's not gonna get very far in life with that attitude.

Maureen: Well, one of these days he's just going to get kicked in the face by reality, and that's going to hurt.

Teacher: So you're doing a little bit of kicking; you're just giving a few little...

Maureen: ...so he can handle it in small doses.

Betty: I think that you can tell a person very nicely and he'll take it really good, 'cause I did that and, and took it really good.

Teacher: How are you doing with him?

Wendy: Oh, Mr. Statistical!

Teacher: Yeah.

Wendy: Oh he's weird. You know, we got along great when we're talking. He writes things to me like--his hand will

start shaking--like the writing will start getting all shaky and he'll say, "Oh, I better stop. I'm getting one of my nervous tantrums," and his writing will be just like this, you know. And I write back to him, "Aw, I just think you're pulling my leg." But he said, "No," But he's getting--oh, I was so glad one day because he was writing all about the Population Bomb and I'm OK; You're OK and Gestalt Therapy for Freedom.

Teacher: You're really pickin up the old language there, Wendy!

Wendy: No, I read that, Gestalt Therapy for Freedom, and I gave it to him to read because I knew he was interested in psychology. And he wrote to me. And now he's really starting to, he's starting to get in more emotion, not so tightened up and statistical.

A Student Helper's Weekly Journal

My week was good. We're doing these games or exercises to help us open up and get ready for drama exercises. John Weber gets right in and participates. He told me in his journal that the only reason he doesn't write a lot is because he doesn't know what to say to me.

Then there's Hazim, he's a super nice kid and he's just like me. He loves to talk to people, At first, he was quiet, but now he can talk about anything!

Gail is the girl who was skipping so much. She comes pretty well every day now and also puts an awful lot of trust in her journal. I know her from when she was living at my sister-in-law's house. She's a little hard to communicate with, but when I do, or any one for that matter, she really thinks about it.

And last but not least, there's Boyd. At first he was a loud, abusive kid. Now he tells me about his problems in making friends and his family problems. Once you get to know him, he's a good kid. He still makes a small scene in class, but the kids are starting to accept him and let him into their groups.

I really enjoy doing the journals now because every one of them has suddenly opened up and they are wasting me with questions. Great, eh?

I had a long talk with them today and they all said that it would be OK if I wrote to them every second day. I explained to them how having a job and 12 journals to do was tough and they all said that they had noticed it in me and would like the second-day writing because it would be easier on me. Nice of them.

It is quite fun doing my writing. You get to know your students in a completely different way. You learn more from ten minutes a day about their feelings, likes and dislikes than by a talk. Any talks I've had with them, for the most part, have been shielded and guarded. In the writings they are much freer.

It's been a hectic two weeks. The class is on to a new topic. They have to create an island environment. It works really good. The kids are really into it. Me too. I love the topic and find it very hard not to help them and just burst out and tell them my ideas. I do help a little but Mrs. ____ would prefer we didn't help too much, which is right. I really love this class. I just plain old like helping people. Especially kids. These kids are in grade 11, only one below me. I really would like to teach Junior High. It'd be nice to do that; but then I'd like to teach football in Senior High. I guess maybe I should just worry about myself and getting through. I'm here for a long time and a good time.

SOME PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. Is understanding others and making oneself understood an immediate goal towards which all teachers should strive and encourage their

students to strive?

2. Is it worth the risk to reveal something of yourself and your experiences in order to promote growth in others?

3. Can we use the student's expressive language and his personal experiences every day in every classroom?

4. Is it necessary that all talk be relevant to course content?

5. Must we always be more concerned with the product rather than with the process by which a student arrives at that product?

6. Is it worthwhile to take class time for students to look back to see how far they've come?

7. Are we aware that many students may not understand our language? How can we become more aware of our language and theirs?

8. How can we enter into a social relationship with everyone in a class of 30 or more students in order to find out what they can do?

9. What is happening in today's classrooms that is helping students to become self-actualizing persons?

10. Finally,

> How can a person feel able unless he experiences success?
> How can a person feel wanted unless someone wants him?
> How can a person feel dignified unless someone treats him with dignity?[21]

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[21] M. Combs, University of Miami, in an address to teachers in Calgary, February, 1973.

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